

*Tavistock Urban
District Council.*



REPORT

OF

Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE

Year Ending December,
1938.

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,
Medical Officer of Health.

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PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF.

Medical Officer of Health,
Medical Officer for Maternity and Child Welfare Centre,
School Medical Officer,
E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., Birm.

Surveyor and Sanitary Officer,
J. N. SINGLETON, F.S.I., M.R.San.I., M.Inst.R.A.

Health Visitor,
MISS M. E. STONE.
State Registered Nurse. Certified Midwife.
Health Visitor's Certificate,
Certificate in Infectious Diseases.

Meteorologist,
W. J. MONK.

Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Johnstone, and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1938.

The health of the town throughout the year was generally very good. Both births and deaths were less than the previous year. The chief causes of death were again heart disease, old age, and cancer.

The Registrar General estimates that there was an increase in population of sixteen people. As, however, the deaths exceeded the births by fourteen this increase could not have been a natural one, but entirely due to migration from other districts.

The only notifyable disease appearing was scarlet fever. When suitable accommodation existed cases were nursed at home, and no tendency to spread was noticed from this action.

Pollution of the River Tavy was brought to my notice. On investigation this was found to be entirely due to the excessive amount of water which is allowed in the sewers, both surface and from springs. The same cause is responsible for serious bogging of the irrigation fields. If this is allowed to continue indefinitely the purification system will be badly damaged.

A survey of the milk supply was carried out, and at the time of writing action is being taken to guard the public against danger from this essential article of diet.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

Physical Features. The Urban District lies in the valley of the River Tavy, at approximately Lat. $50^{\circ} 33' N.$, Long. $4^{\circ} 9' W.$ It comprises an area of 2098 acres, and the altitude varies from 228ft. on the Plymouth Road to 564ft. on the Hurdwick Road.

The District is both Urban and Rural in character. The bulk of the former lies along the northern bank of the river, with a branch along a subsidiary valley to the north. The surface is hilly, with general fall towards the river. The nature of the ground varies somewhat, in the higher portions hard rock, shale, or freestone being reached within a few feet of the surface. In the lower-lying portions along the valley, sand, gravel and small boulders, interspersed with beds of loamy earth and weak clay, overlie rock and shale, with the result that subsoil water along the valley is reached at very shallow depths.

Social Conditions. The town, with its beautiful surroundings and proximity to the City of Plymouth, has naturally attracted many retired members of His Majesties Forces and other people of independent means. The chief industries are connected with agriculture and distributive trades; there are also quarrying, wool factory, and some small workshops.

The Charities of the District are:—

Ford Street.—Four Almshouses, each containing four rooms for the accommodation of one person.

Maynard's Charity.—One house, containing four sets of rooms for the accommodation of old couples.

Browne Memorial.—Eight semi-detached cottages, each with living room, bedroom and offices.

Watts and Ford Street Charities distribute doles of 10s. and upward each year, to a total amount of about £300.

There are also the Marshall Charities in the Whitchurch area which now form part of the district.

SECTION A.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (statute acres)—2098 acres.

Population, 1931 census—5130.

Estimated population, mid-1938—5556.

Number of inhabited houses—1581, an increase of 33 over the previous year.

Rateable value—£38,021.

Product of Penny Rate—£148.

VITAL STATISTICS.

	Male.	Female.	Total.	England & Wales.
Live Births {	Illegitimate 4	5	}	60
	Total 31	29		
Birth rate per 1000 of estimated resident population			10.7	15.1
Still Births, legitimate ... ..	...	...	...	1
Still Birth rate ... ..	...	...	...	60
DEATHS.—Males 30, Females 44, Total ...	...	...	...	74
Death rate per 1000 resident population	...	...	...	13.4
Death rate after adjustment ... ..	...	...	...	9.5
Deaths from puerperal causes ... ..	...	...	...	0.0
Deaths of infants under one year ... ..	...	...	...	3
Death rate of infants under one year ...	...	...	...	50

The 74 deaths recorded of townspeople during the past year were made up as follows:—

Measles	...	...	...	...	...	1
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	...	0
Influenza	...	...	...	...	...	2
Diarrhoea under 2 years	...	...	...	...	...	0
Tuberculosis of Respiratory System	...	...	...	...	...	2
Other tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	...	0
Cancer	...	...	...	...	...	9
Cerebral haemorrhage	...	...	...	...	...	4
Heart disease	...	...	...	...	...	14
Other circulatory diseases	...	...	...	...	...	4
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	5
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	4
Other respiratory diseases	...	...	...	...	...	0
Diseases of liver	...	...	...	...	...	1
Diseases of digestive system	...	...	...	...	...	1
Acute and chronic nephritis	...	...	...	...	...	3
Puerperal sepsis	...	...	...	...	...	0
Congenital debility prematurity, etc	...	...	...	...	...	2
Senility	...	...	...	...	...	10
Violence	...	...	...	...	...	2
Other defined diseases	...	...	...	...	...	8

AGE OF DEATH TABLE.

Age at Death.	Males.	Females.
Infants under 1 year	2	1
1—5 years	0	0
6—15 years	0	0
16—25 years	1	0
26—35 years	2	1
36—45 years	0	1
46—55 years	0	3
56—65 years	3	4
66—75 years	14	12
Over 76 years	8	22
Total	30	44

74

SECTION B.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES.

Laboratory facilities are supplied by Devon County Council for testing milk samples and analysing water samples. Also for examining bacteriological specimens of infectious cases.

Ambulance Facilities. An ambulance service is offered by a privately controlled ambulance stationed in Tavistock by St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Infectious cases are carried to hospital by the Plymouth City fever hospital ambulance.

Nursing in the Home. Arrangements made by the local District Nursing Association.

Treatment Centres and Clinics. A school clinic is held in the town once a week, and is well attended by children with minor ailments or who are in need of regular observation. Cases in need of treatment are referred to the practitioner in charge, and others who are merely delicate are referred to the open-air school at Torrington, where they derive great benefit.

Hospitals : Public and Voluntary. The town possesses a voluntary Hospital with accommodation for 47 beds. The staff consists of matron, 1 sister tutor, 3 sisters (2 day, 1 night), one assistant nurse, one masseuse, and 7 probationer nurses. During the year 446 cases were admitted, and to these must be added 382 out-patient dressings, and 292 X-ray examinations. One Private Nursing Home.

Institutional Treatment for Mothers and Children. The service is available at the Public Assistance Institution.

Health Visitors. Health visiting is undertaken by a lady appointed by Devon County Council. She undertakes visiting newly born babies and helping with advice, supervising the home treatment of tuberculous patients, inspection of school children, etc., and I cannot but stress the importance of this work in maintaining a decent hygiene in the home, the care of mothers and the well being of school children.

Infant Welfare Centre. A very well attended infant welfare is held weekly where babies are weighed and mothers advised by the health visitor or myself. During the year attendances were greatly augmented by the entry of people from outside the town boundary.

Miss Stone, health visitor to the Infant Welfare Centre has supplied me with the following figures for attendance of mothers, infants and toddlers at the weekly sessions held on Fridays:— Mothers, 1292; Infants, 674; Toddlers, 1208; Total, 3174.

A voluntary team of ladies help with the weighing and general comfort of the babies and mothers.

Orthopaedic Treatment. There are no facilities for this in the town, but patients suffering from these defects attend at Plymouth. The Clinic is run on a voluntary basis, but receives help from the Education Committee as regards school children.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION OF THE DISTRICT

Cases of infectious diseases that require removal are now sent to Plymouth Isolation Hospital.

A Disinfecting Chamber for the district is available. Disinfection is carried out at the Poor Law Institution.

SECTION C.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

1. **Water Supply.** The source of the main water supply is intermittent springs and sub-soil water, gathered in the Wallabrook and Sandypark valleys from large drainage areas. The water is collected by means of sub-soil land drains. Distribution is, except in the case of the Whitchurch Down Reservoir, by means of gravitation through mains that vary in size from 10ins. to 3ins. A storage of 368,000 gallons is provided for in three reservoirs, the largest with a capacity of 242,000 gallons, being on the Kilworthy section, and acts as a balancing tank. The Whitchurch Down Reservoir (100,000-gallons) is supplied from the Kilworthy service by means of an electric pump in the Down Road. The pump at the Wharf is kept in reserve for emergency use. The quality is good, and the quantity has been sufficient to maintain a good supply of water even during the dry season of the year.

A waste dectector instrument has been purchased by the Council, and the mains are periodically tested and examined.

Water (i). The Council have engaged a Water Engineeer to prepare a scheme for an extension of the water supply to the district. Several new sources of supply have been inspected, but the final report of the Engineer has not yet been received.

Five samples were sent for analysis and the results were good in each case. Samples are taken quarterly. Quality of water is good and the quantity sufficient.

The Bannawell Street Reservoir is 26,000 gallons capacity.

RAINFALL, 1938.

	Total Depth.	Greatest Fall.	Date.		Mean-Earth Tem- perature at 4ft.
January	7.36	.98	8th	January	45.3
February ...	1.72	.81	25th	February ...	46.4
March .....	.44	.02	24th	March	47.3
April .....	.09	.06	2nd	April	51.2
May	4.39	.98	13th	May	53.7
June	2.00	.69	1st	June	56.8
July	4.14	1.40	6th	July	58.0
August	8.52	2.30	3rd	August	61.1
September ..	2.81	1.06	18th	September ..	59.3
October	6.26	.95	1st	October	55.7
November ...	7.70	1.06	19th	November ...	53.1
December ...	5.98	1.15	13th	December ...	46.9
<hr/>					
Total	51.41				

Mean temperature for 12 months, 49.1.

Average amount of rainfall is 47.6 inches.

An additional storage reservoir should be provided for the higher levels.

The Council have under consideration the extension of water mains to the higher levels of the District.

2. Rivers. The River Tavy flows through the district and is very rapid and self cleansing and is generally very clean. The storm overflow from the Sewage Works has been improved to prevent pollution of the river.

An extension of the 6-inch sewer at Whitchurch was made to connect up several new houses in that area.

The houses in the district not connected with the town mains number 36, and draw their supply from 14 wells and 9 springs, 19 are above the gravitation supply and the remainder at some distance from the mains.

(ii) Drainage and Sewerage. The sewage disposal works at Crowndale are designed on the lines of a combined bacterial and broad irrigation system, and are adequate and satisfactory for the efficient treatment of the town sewage.

3. (i) Closet Accommodation. The system is, in the main, a water-carriage one, and of the water closets 1841 are provided with flushing apparatus and 16 are hand-flushed. Improvements in closet accommodation are being regularly carried out.

(ii) Public Cleansing. The whole of the work is carried out by direct labour by means of the Council's motor lorry.

The house refuse is collected from the main parts of the town twice a week, the outlying sections having one collection only. The refuse is deposited at a new "tip" at Hartshole Quarry.

(iii) Sanitary Inspection of the District. The details of this work are furnished in the Sanitary Inspector's Report.

Premises and Occupations.—There are no offensive trades carried on in the district.

IV. Shops.—Lavatory accommodation has been provided in three cases.

V.—There are no camping sites in the district.

VI.—No smoke abatement cases.

VII. Swimming Bath.—The Council have provided a public open air swimming bath, which has the use of the town water supply, and is much used during the summer.

VIII.—No cases of bed bugs have occurred.

4. Schools. The town offers good educational advantages. The Kelly College and Grammar School for boys and girls. There are two private schools. The County Council Junior and Church of England Schools and an Elementary School at Whitchurch supply facilities for elementary education. The new Secondary School is now being used as a mixed school for higher education.

The sanitary apparatus and fittings of the several schools are in good sanitary condition.

The water supply of all the schools in the Urban District is drawn from the town supply. The inspection of the scholars in the elementary schools is carried out by the County Council Medical Officers, who negotiate through local channels for the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases.

SECTION D.**HOUSING.****I. Inspection of Dwelling Houses.**

1. Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health Housing Acts) ... 42
2. Number of dwelling-houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Regulations ... 42
3. Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous as injurious to health or unfit for human habitation ... None
4. Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under sub-heading 3) found to be not in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ... 22

II. Remedy of Defects without service of Formal Notices ... 20**III. Action under Statutory Powers Demolition Notices served
None.****(a) Proceedings under Public Health Acts.**

1. Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied 16
2. Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied:—
 - (a) By Owners ... 16
 - (b) By Local Authorities in default of Owners Nil
- (b) Proceedings under Housing Acts, 1925 Nil
- (c) Closing Orders Made ... Nil

IV. Housing Act, 1935.—Overcrowding:—

- (a)— (i) Number of dwellings overcrowded at the end of the year ... 8
- (ii) Number of families dwelling therein ... 8
- (iii) Number of persons dwelling therein ... 57
- (b)—Number of new cases of overcrowding reported during the year ... Nil
- (c)— (i) Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year ... Nil
- (ii) Number of persons concerned in such cases ... Nil
- (d)—Particulars of any cases in which dwelling-houses have again become overcrowded after the Local Authority have taken steps for the abatement of overcrowding ... Nil

Housing Statistics (a) The total number of houses in the District is 1581, and of these 971 are occupied by working class families

Housing (a) Statistics.

Number of new houses erected during the year:—

(a) Total (including number given separately under “ b ”)	...	33
(b) With State assistance (under Housing Acts):—		
1. By Local Authority	... ..	Nil
II. By other persons or bodies	... ..	Nil
(c) Without assistance:—		
I. By other persons or bodies	... ..	33
		—
		33

General Observations as to Housing Conditions. The Council

have under their powers under the Housing Act, 1930, dealt with 4 slum clearance areas, comprising 37 houses, and have built 36 new houses to accommodate the people displaced. One house has been closed. The Council have now under consideration the provision of further houses to relieve overcrowding of the four-bedroomed type.

Sufficiency of Supply of Houses.

- (a) There is still need for new houses at reasonable rents, some 20 being required.
- (b) The population shows an increase owing to extension of area.
- (c) There are no special difficulties in the way of providing such houses.

Except in a few cases the whole of the houses are supplied with water from the public supply. Closets are generally fitted with flushing apparatus.

- (a) No evidence is to hand that the Bye-laws in any way interfered with the erection of houses.
- (b) The number of houses inspected are shown in the Inspector's Report.

SECTION E.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

(a) **Milk Supply.** No cases of infectious disease have been attributable to milk contamination.

School Milk. Samples of these are taken from time to time and the results of the analysis have been found good.

Thirty-eight samples have been taken and sent to the County Council for analysis. Reports received shew of the samples sent 23 passed, 15 failed.

(b) **Meat and Other Foods.** The slaughter houses are substantially constructed, paved, drained, and for business purposes conveniently situated and easily accessible for the purpose of inspection, and are being kept in good condition and well cleaned regularly.

The slaughter houses are owned and under the direct control of the Council.

The private butchers' shops having fitted glass fronts or glazed shutters, the P.H. Meat Regulations, 1924, are being carried out.

CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED.

	Cattle, exclud- ing Cows	Cows.	Calves.	Sheep & Lambs.	Pigs.
Number Killed (if known)	340	8	20	3,186	1,538
Number inspected	160	8	20	1,460	720
<i>All diseases except Tuberculosis</i>					
Whole Carcases Condemned	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil
Carcases of which some part of organ was condemned	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis	Nil	Nil	Nil	.07	Nil
<i>Tuberculosis only.</i>					
Whole carcases condemned	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	3
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	26
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	2.5%	Nil	Nil	Nil	4%

SECTION F.

**PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS AND
OTHER DISEASE.**

The incidence of infectious diseases was very low. Of the notifiable cases only six cases of scarlet fever of a very mild type were recorded.

Of the exanthemata only measles cases were reported with one death.

One suspected case of anthrax occurred, but was shown on further investigation not to be so.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Five new cases of the disease were notified, mainly in elderly or middle-aged people.

Three deaths were recorded from the disease.

At the end of the year sixteen men and nine women remained on the register as suffering from the disease.

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, TUBERCULOSIS.

Age Periods	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Respiratory		Non-Resp.		Resp.		Non-Resp.	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
45	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
55	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Totals	3	1	1	—	—	1	—	1

I am, Mrs. Johnstone and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

Medical Officer of Health.

April, 1939.

**COUNCIL OFFICES,
TAVISTOCK.**

To Dr. ALLEN-PRICE, Medical Officer of Health.

Sir,

I beg to submit the Inspector's Report for year ended the 31st day of December, 1938.

Inspections. Inspections during the period include:—

254 visits to houses.

44 „ „ 36 dairies and cowsheds.

39 „ „ 39 factories and workshops.

262 „ „ schools, stations, slaughterhouses,
markets, and other premises and works
not otherwise included.

Notices. Sixteen preliminary notices have been served and the requirements have been carried out in each case.

Sanitary Work. The Sanitary work carried out as a result of the inspections made include:—

13 Drainage systems repaired and relaid in part.

10 New water closets constructed.

2 Baths fixed.

2 Urinals.

2 Lavatory Basins.

Housing. Thirty-nine houses have been completed by private enterprise and are occupied.

The sanitary work in connection with these houses has been:—

29 New Drainage Systems laid and connected to sewers.

45 Water Closets constructed.

33 Baths have been fitted to new houses.

35 Lavatory Basins.

Disinfection. Disinfection of the rooms, bedding and clothing, etc., has been carried out in 21 cases.. Arrangements have been made for the use of the steam apparatus in use at the Poor Law Institution and this method is adopted as required from time to time.

Dairies and Cowsheds. The retailers of milk registered number fourteen, four distribute direct from carts, two retail a small quantity from premises also used as restaurants. The conditions are generally satisfactory. Six only of the registered retailers are engaged in the production of milk.

Five wholesale dealers in milk are registered and in every case small separate milk stores are provided for the storage of milk and dairy produce on the premises, the cowsheds are of substantial construction and, on inspection, have been found in a cleanly condition.

There are also registered thirteen owners of cows that are kept for the domestic supply of milk and dairy produce.

Factories and Workshops. Thirty-nine visits have been made to factories and workshops, and these were found generally clean.

Food Inspection. Four Bullocks, one Lamb, three Pigs, and 26 Pigs' heads have been seized and destroyed.

House Refuse Removal. The removal of the refuse from the town by motor lorry is working satisfactorily, and is deposited in a disused quarry at Hartshole.

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal. The sewerage system of the district has continued satisfactorily throughout the year. An extension of the Sludge Beds has been made during the year.

The Disposal Works at Crowndale continue to deal with the sewage, but investigations are being made with reference to excess of water. The works are being kept in order and the duties of the attendant are carried out regularly and well.

Water Supply. The Supply during the year has been ample and well maintained.

33 additional houses have been connected up during the year, and additional supply to 55 new w.c's, 35 baths, and 35 lavatory basins made, and 2 urinals.

J. N. SINGLETON,

Sanitary Inspector.

